



TRICARE Pacific Lead Agency

1 Jarrett White Road (MCHK-LA)
Tripler AMC, HI 96859-5000

Ph. (808) 433-1390 DSN 433-1390 Toll-Free 888-777-8343
Fax (808) 433-3673 DSN 433-3673

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Subject: Implied TRICARE Affiliations of Health Care Companies Operating Overseas

This office has received several inquiries regarding health care agencies/companies such as Health Visions and CyberCare operating in overseas locations and servicing TRICARE beneficiaries. Please be advised that, notwithstanding representations or perceptions to the contrary, such companies have no official standing/connection with the U. S. Government and its TRICARE Program. Healthcare providers and facilities not associated with such companies undergo the same TRICARE certification review as those required of providers/facilities that are affiliated with the companies. If and when applicable requirements are met, all certified providers/facilities have equal standing with the TRICARE overseas claims processor as authorized providers eligible for payment of healthcare claims for the care of TRICARE beneficiaries.

In response to complaints received from several overseas beneficiaries, the TRICARE Management Activity disseminated an informational letter to health care companies operating overseas to advise them of activities that are considered inappropriate and/or could constitute fraudulent billings. Examples cited were:

- Billing or submitting claims for non-covered or non-chargeable services by disguising them as covered items. A billing agency may NOT include its administrative costs in submitting a claim for health care services. Such action is considered fraudulent. A billing agency may charge the provider for an administrative fee to cover the costs of submitting the claim. However, the cost cannot be passed on to the U. S. Government in the form of a health care service/charge.
- Billings or claims that involve flagrant and persistent over-utilization of services.
- Billings for services not provided, i.e., charging an office visit for a prescription refill when no office visit took place.
- Arrangements that are designed primarily to overcharge TRICARE through various means, such as commissions, fee-splitting and kickbacks, which are used to divert or conceal improper or unnecessary costs or profits.
- Unauthorized use of the term "TRICARE" in private business. While the use of the term "TRICARE" is not prohibited by federal statute, misrepresentation or description of the term "TRICARE" to imply an official connection with the U. S. Government or to defraud may be a violation of federal statute.
- Improper billing practices. This may include charging TRICARE beneficiaries for services and supplies at rates that are in excess of those charges routinely charged to the general public. For instance, prescription drug charges should not exceed the average drug wholesale price. Other services, both professional and institutional, shall not represent excessive charges.

- A pattern of claims for services which are not medically necessary or, if medically necessary, not to the extent rendered.
- Waiving the deductible or cost-share and/or offering a financial inducement to encourage the receipt of health care services.
- Engaging in a practice that ultimately results in a waiver of the deductible or cost-share.
- Failing to promptly refund the U. S. Government any dollars resulting from inappropriate billing or overpayments.

Please be advised that the above actions are fraudulent/abusive and prohibited by the Code of Federal Regulations (32 CFR, 199.9). Those knowingly participating in any of the activities described above may be subject to consequences including prosecution and denial of future claims for payment by TRICARE. Beneficiaries who become aware of organizations engaging in activities described above are invited to forward their concerns to the TRICARE overseas claims processor at reportit@wps.com or:

WPS Correspondence
Attn: TRICARE Program Integrity
P.O. Box 7985
Madison, WI 53707

Questions regarding this matter may be referred to the WESTPAC Service Center and/or the Director, Remote Operations and Customer Service at the contact numbers listed at the top of this letter.

Sincerely,

ARTHUR P. WALLACE
Colonel, U. S. Army
Executive Director